

# Farrington Community Academy

Allendale Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR3 3EL

## Inspection dates

3–4 April 2019

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not acted swiftly enough to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. The pace of improvement has accelerated since the arrival of the new headteacher but not enough to support good progress for pupils.
- The quality of teaching and learning is variable. The improving picture in English and mathematics is tempered by variable teaching in other curriculum subjects.
- Pupils' progress has been weak in recent years and standards have declined. Although current progress is stronger, pupils do not make good progress from their starting points.
- While middle leaders are becoming more influential in improving standards of teaching and pupil welfare, they do not check the effects of their actions closely enough.
- Curriculum pathways do not consistently meet the needs of all pupils, particularly pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teaching does not consistently meet the learning needs of these pupils well enough, particularly their literacy needs.
- Although there is some evidence that the progress of disadvantaged pupils and boys is improving, this still lags behind that of other pupils and is not catching up quickly enough.
- Rates of absence and fixed-term exclusion are too high for pupils, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. For some pupils, this has a negative effect on their progress.
- Although behaviour in lessons and around school has improved considerably, low-level disruption continues to affect pupils' learning, particularly at key stage 3.

### The school has the following strengths

- Since his arrival, the headteacher has increased the pace of improvement. This is leading to a better quality of teaching, learning and assessment and much better behaviour.
- Higher expectations and shared planning are contributing to improving teaching in English and mathematics. Pupils are making much better progress in these subjects.
- The majority of pupils are responding positively to new lesson routines which include increased challenge and greater opportunities to improve the quality of their work.
- Leaders and teachers show a commitment to the welfare of all pupils. They provide valuable support for pupils' social and emotional well-being.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, so that the capacity for school improvement is strengthened, by:
  - developing the roles of middle leaders in improving pupils' progress and welfare and their ability to measure the effects of their actions
  - developing the expertise of governors and trustees so that they hold leaders to account in a timely and effective manner on all aspects of school performance
  - refining actions to support the progress, engagement and attendance of disadvantaged pupils
  - refining the curriculum to enable all pupils, including pupils with SEND, to make good progress.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment so that pupils' progress and attainment, particularly for boys, disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND, improve, by:
  - securing greater consistency in the quality of teaching so that pupils are engaged, and any remaining low-level disruption is effectively challenged
  - embedding higher expectations and new lesson routines to enable all pupils to make stronger progress
  - sharing the most effective teaching practice across the school so that improving practice in subjects such as English and mathematics is replicated in all curriculum subjects
  - ensuring that teachers meet the learning needs of lower-ability pupils and pupils with SEND by supporting their literacy needs more effectively.
- Improve pupils' personal development, behaviour and welfare, by:
  - reducing instances of fixed-term exclusion
  - working with greater urgency with pupils and families to significantly improve rates of attendance.

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management

### Requires improvement

- In the first year after the previous inspection, leaders and governors took little effective action to halt a decline in pupils' outcomes. This was reflected in the weak picture of pupils' progress in published school performance information. Since his arrival in January 2018, the new headteacher has worked purposefully to improve standards of behaviour and the quality of teaching. These actions are contributing to improving rates of progress.
- The headteacher has taken action to raise standards of behaviour and address disruption to learning. He has striven to 'give teachers their classrooms back'. Staff and the majority of pupils value the more purposeful approaches to learning. The headteacher has faced opposition from some pupils and parents to the stronger sanctions for misbehaviour. However, inspectors saw much evidence of productive learning environments in the majority of classrooms.
- The headteacher has introduced more formal staff training to improve the quality of teaching. There is evidence of consistent approaches to planning and assessment, especially in English and mathematics. While there remains much variability in how effectively these new approaches are being implemented between staff and departments, they are beginning to improve the quality of teaching.
- The headteacher is working alongside external partners to improve the quality of subject leadership. Some subject leaders are introducing curriculum plans and teaching approaches that are having a positive effect upon pupils' progress. In other subjects, less incisive leadership and gaps in specialist staff are leading to much slower improvement.
- Senior leaders are holding middle leaders more accountable for the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in their subjects. Middle leaders were able to demonstrate the more intensive quality control systems they now use. While they make regular checks on new routines and expectations, there remains some variability in how well they evaluate the effect of their actions.
- Pastoral leaders are committed to the social and emotional welfare of the pupils in their care. They are developing new strategies to improve pupils' welfare, such as access to counselling services. However, in common with some other middle leaders, they lack a clear awareness of the effects of their improvement strategies.
- Leaders with responsibility for pupils with SEND, including pupils in the enhanced mainstream provision, provide a nurturing environment for the pupils in their care. They use funding to provide effective nurture and support. On occasions, they have not sufficiently developed the expertise of staff to support the literacy needs of some pupils in accessing the curriculum across a wide range of subjects.
- Overall, leaders provide a broad and balanced curriculum. They recognise that the current curriculum does not consistently stretch the most able pupils or provide consistently suitable pathways for pupils with SEND and some lower-ability pupils. Leaders have already revised the curriculum offer for September 2019 to address the needs of these pupils more effectively.

- Leaders provide appropriate opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils gain an understanding of a range of faiths and show respect for equalities, including differences of race and sexual orientation.
- The headteacher has secured positive staff morale and a collective commitment to raising aspirations. In discussions, and in their responses to the staff questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of staff valued the actions to improve behaviour and raise expectations. Although accountability and challenge have increased, staff appreciate the more purposeful learning environment in which they work.
- Leaders are introducing strategies to address the needs of the increasing proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium. 'Pupil premium champions' now focus more closely on the potential barriers pupils may face. While there is evidence of some signs of improving progress for disadvantaged pupils, significant differences in their attendance and progress remain when compared to their peers in school and other pupils nationally.
- Leaders commission support from a local authority to provide support for leadership and teaching. This is building leadership capacity and subject expertise and beginning to compensate for a previous lack of effective partnership working.
- Pupils benefit from a coherent and impartial careers education programme that helps them in making appropriate choices for their next steps. The proportion of pupils progressing to education, employment or training is in line with that seen nationally.
- Much of the Year 7 catch-up funding is used to support a 'secondary ready' programme which targets those pupils with significant gaps in their literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills. It is too early to assess the effect of this initiative and whether the separate teaching of these pupils for extended periods of time limits their experience of the wider curriculum.

## **Governance of the school**

- In the aftermath of the previous report, governors did not act with sufficient or timely effect to stem a decline in standards. Over the past 14 months, they have worked more closely with the headteacher to monitor standards more carefully. They now have regular access to more reliable information about how well pupils are doing that gives them a better view of the standards pupils reach. They also meet subject leaders on a regular basis to check the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in particular subjects.
- Governors have supported the headteacher through a difficult period of change. Some parents have expressed dissatisfaction to new behaviour systems and the stricter sanctions that have been introduced. However, governors have stood by these changes so that the disruptions to learning that previously undermined teaching can be eradicated.
- Governors are working with an external educational development partner to gain objective perspectives on the quality of the school's work. Recent appointments have increased the capacity of governance and their expertise.
- There remains variance in the knowledge of governors. For example, they do not question in sufficient depth whether the separate teaching of some groups of pupils, including pupils with SEND, limits their access to the curriculum, subject specialists and

their peers.

## Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school's arrangements meet all legal requirements. Leaders ensure that staff, including those new to the school, are appropriately trained on safeguarding issue and that staff are kept alert to pupils' welfare needs.
- Leaders and teachers are committed to the needs of vulnerable pupils and staff are mindful of potential risks. They work closely with families to support pupils' welfare. Leaders refer concerns over pupils' welfare to external agencies and pursue these concerns tenaciously to ensure that pupils are safe. On occasions, leaders' written records do not fully reflect the actions they have taken to safeguard pupils.
- Leaders care for all their pupils. They are fully committed to ensuring that pupils are safe. Pupils who inspectors talked to were confident that there is someone to talk to about their concerns. They know that any issues raised will be taken seriously by staff and dealt with promptly.
- Leaders have recently introduced a personal development programme to promote pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils demonstrated a clear awareness of how to avoid some of the dangers they may face online and of some of the threats they may face in the wider community.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

## Requires improvement

- Over time, weaknesses in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment have limited pupils' progress across a wide range of subjects. There is evidence that teaching is improving in English and mathematics, although variability persists elsewhere.
- On occasions, teaching does not meet the literacy needs of lower-ability pupils and pupils with SEND well enough. Some of these pupils lack the reading and comprehension skills needed to engage purposefully with the curriculum.
- Leaders are introducing new approaches to planning that are beginning to improve the quality of teaching. In English and mathematics, leaders have introduced shared planning and resources that are underpinning improvements in teaching. In English, shared planning was used effectively to deepen pupils' understanding of poetry and Shakespeare. These approaches are less embedded in other subjects such as science and geography, where pupils make more variable progress.
- Although levels of challenge in lessons are still variable, leaders are introducing systems that compel teachers to incorporate challenge into their planning. Pupils are responding to these systems and are aware of the higher expectations of them in lessons. This was reflected in their willingness to embrace more complex problems in mathematics and deeper textual analysis in English.
- New assessment practices are beginning to encourage pupils to respond to feedback to improve the quality of their work but are not yet embedded and practice is inconsistent. Where it is used effectively, pupils are responding purposefully and making better progress. However, for some pupils, errors are not addressed and so

misconceptions continue.

- Some teachers effectively secure positive attitudes to learning, encouraging pupils to respond to questions, share ideas and focus effectively upon their work. However, this is not consistently the case. Some pupils are not fully engaged in their learning and this can lead to low-level disruption, especially in key stage 3.
- In some subjects, gaps in staffing have undermined the consistency of teaching and made it difficult for changes to planning and assessment to be implemented effectively.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare

**Requires improvement**

### Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement. Pastoral leaders are introducing new personal, social and health education programmes to make pupils more aware of their health and well-being. Leaders have developed links with organisations such as Barnardo's to provide counselling support for pupils, although they are not always clearly aware of the effects of these initiatives.
- In areas where teaching is strong, teachers develop positive attitudes to learning that encourage pupils to develop their self-confidence and become more assured as learners. In these areas, pupils are willing to share their views and respond to questions. Where teaching is weaker, learning behaviours are much less developed, sometimes resulting in low-level disruption.
- Leaders make pupils aware of some of the hazards they may face, such as the threats they may face online or the threats posed by radicalisation. Pupils study texts in subjects such as English that make them aware of the dangers posed by gangs.
- In discussion, pupils said that staff took incidents of bullying seriously and they were confident that leaders would work to address such incidents.
- Pastoral managers are particularly mindful of the needs of vulnerable pupils. They check the welfare of these pupils closely and work with families and with external partners to provide extra support. Leaders have clear systems in place to check the welfare and attendance of pupils at alternative provision. However, these pupils make much weaker progress than their peers.

### Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. The headteacher has made improving standards of behaviour a key priority. One of his key aims on arrival was to 'give teachers their classrooms back'. In the majority of lessons visited, teachers secured a positive approach to learning. New behaviour systems are leading to much better behaviour around the school site and orderly starts to lessons.
- Staff and pupils at key stage 4 commented upon discernible improvements in behaviour that were leading to a more productive learning environment. Pupils at key stage 3 expressed a more mixed view of behaviour in lessons, as low-level disruption

could interrupt their learning.

- Leaders and governors have faced opposition from some parents to the stricter behaviour sanctions that have been introduced. However, leaders have stood by these changes that are contributing toward higher standards of behaviour on site.
- Senior leaders are working with pupils to manage behaviour. They have set up new approaches to reduce the risk of fixed-term exclusion. The most recent information indicates that incidents of exclusion reduced markedly in the last quarter of the spring term, showing that new behavioural expectations are beginning to be embedded. However, overall rates of fixed-term exclusion and permanent exclusion remain too high.
- Leaders are introducing new targeted approaches to improve attendance. They have commissioned support from the local authority to work with pupils and families where absence is more entrenched. They have also introduced an attendance bus to visit pupils at home to secure better attendance. These initiatives are relatively new and it is too early to assess if they are securing desired improvements. While persistent absence has reduced for disadvantaged pupils, overall rates of absence for all pupils and disadvantaged pupils are still too high and proving difficult to reduce.

## Outcomes for pupils

## Requires improvement

- Upon his arrival in January 2018, the headteacher inherited a legacy of declining standards and poor progress. In 2016 and 2017, pupils' progress was below average in the overwhelming majority of subjects. In the short period of time before the summer 2018 examinations, the headteacher was able to work with teachers to raise the proportion of pupils achieving strong passes in English and mathematics to a standard almost in line with national averages. However, overall progress from pupils' starting points declined further.
- Current pupils are making better progress, particularly in English and mathematics. A thorough review of mathematics books revealed that pupils are developing a secure knowledge of mathematical methods that they are applying consistently to solve more-challenging problems. Teachers are using thorough planning and effective assessment to support improving progress.
- In English, teachers are using shared planning to set tasks and develop resources that are enabling pupils to make better progress. There is evidence of pupils developing effective strategies to analyse more complex texts and select quotations that best support their interpretations. Work in books shows evidence of improving progress.
- Pupils' progress is more variable in other areas of the curriculum. Improving progress in history is tempered by much weaker standards in geography. While there is some evidence of improving progress in some science books at key stage 4, the picture is variable. Pupils' progress at key stage 4 is typically stronger than at key stage 3.
- Teachers have addressed the need to enrich the curriculum with higher challenge. This is formally built into lesson planning for all teachers. This is enabling pupils to make improving progress, particularly the most able pupils.
- Over time, disadvantaged pupils have made weak progress by the end of key stage 4.

Leaders are beginning to address their needs more closely. A review of books and recent school progress information shows some signs of improving progress, but their progress remains much weaker than that of their peers in school and other pupils nationally.

- There is evidence that boys are making better progress in English and mathematics. Some of the differences in their progress compared to that of girls in school are beginning to close, although it continues to be weaker.
- Leaders provide nurturing support for pupils with SEND that supports their social and emotional development. However, their academic progress has been more mixed, as pupils with SEND, including pupils in the enhanced mainstream provision, are not consistently equipped with the skills to make progress on the courses available to them. Literacy support for pupils with SEND, and for lower-ability pupils, does not support their progress sufficiently.
- The small number of pupils in alternative education placements make much weaker progress than their peers. Gaps in attendance and previous interruptions to their learning have an adverse effect on the progress of some of these pupils.
- The proportion of Year 11 pupils entering education, employment and training has been in line with that seen nationally.

## School details

Unique reference number	139852
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10087567

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Secondary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	11 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	768
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Glynis Hossack
Headteacher	Neal Holder
Telephone number	0191 9171500
Website	<a href="http://www.farringdonschool.co.uk">www.farringdonschool.co.uk</a>
Email address	<a href="mailto:enquiries@farringdonca.net">enquiries@farringdonca.net</a>
Date of previous inspection	23–24 November 2016

## Information about this school

- Farringdon Community Academy is smaller than the average secondary school.
- The school is run by the Brighter Academy Trust. The school has a governing body that meets regularly to monitor the school's work. The governing body reports to the board of trustees, which is the body responsible for holding school leaders to account.
- The headteacher took up post in January 2018. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2017.
- The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium is above average and well-above average in some year groups.
- The school hosts enhanced mainstream provision for 38 pupils with autistic spectrum disorder.
- The proportion of pupils with an education, health and care plan is well-above average.

The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is well-above average in some year groups.

- The school has a much higher proportion of boys than is seen nationally.
- A small number of pupils attend alternative provision at Returners and the Beacon of Light Free School.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in a wide range of lessons and classes. Senior leaders joined inspectors for a number of these observations.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders. They also met heads of house with responsibility for pupils' progress and welfare.
- Inspectors met with six members of the governing body, including the chair and the vice-chair, and the director of the Brighter Academy Trust.
- The inspectors met the education development partner commissioned by the school to provide support.
- The inspectors met groups of pupils and talked to pupils about their learning and experiences at the school in lessons and at lunchtime.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaks and lunchtimes and in the transitions between lessons.
- Inspectors listened to several pupils read.
- The inspectors carried out an extensive review of work in pupils' books and folders.
- Inspectors looked at the school's action plans, self-evaluation and a range of documents outlining the school's progress in tackling improvement priorities. They also considered arrangements for safeguarding and records relating to attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors took into account the 44 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire and the 17 free-text responses from parents. They also considered the 70 responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire and the three responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire.

## Inspection team

Malcolm Kirtley, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
John Downs	Ofsted Inspector
Richard Crane	Ofsted Inspector
Dan Murray	Ofsted Inspector

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